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East Timor

- letter of Mgr Belo
- letter of members of the US Congress
- resolution of the European Parliament

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INTRODUCTION

The question of East Timor comes up frequently in the UN. This Portuguese colony has been under Indonesian occupation since December 1975. The Indonesian invasion was condemned by the United Nations' Security Council and General Assembly. Indonesia meanwhile maintains that through a referendum, the people of East Timor chose to stay under Indonesian rule. Portugal rejects this argument, and is supported in its view by dozens of Timorese refugees and by the few witnesses who were able to visit Timor without an Indonesian army escort.

Thus the importance of this document is clear : the Bishop of Lorium and Apostolic Administrator of the episcopal conference of Dili, Mgr Belo, has denounced the human rights violations and is asking that a referendum be organised. This document was sent to the UN Secretary-General UN, but has not been published by the UN. The other two documents illustrate the growing international awareness of the situation in Timor by the international community. These documents are a letter of 118 members of the US Congress, and a resolution adopted by the European Parliament.

La question du Timor oriental est régulièrement évoquée devant les organes des Nations Unies. Cette colonie portugaise est occupée par l'Indonésie depuis décembre 1975. L'invasion indonésienne a été condamnée par le Conseil de Sécurité et l'Assemblée Générale de l'ONU, mais la diplomatie indonésienne prétend que le peuple de Timor a eu l'occasion de déterminer son avenir et qu'il a opté pour l'Indonésie. Cette argumentation est contestée par le Portugal, par les rares témoins qui ont pu se rendre à Timor sans être escortés par l'armée indonésienne, et par les dizaines de Timorais qui ont réussi à quitter le territoire.

D'où l'importance du premier document que nous publions : l'Evêque de Lorium, Administrateur Apostolique de la Conférence épiscopale de Dili, Mgr Belo, dénonce les violations des droits de l'homme et demande qu'un référendum soit organisé. Adressé au Secrétaire Général des Nations Unies, ce document n'a pas encore été publié par l'ONU. Les deux autres documents illustrent la prise de conscience au plan international de la gravité de la situation à Timor : une lettre de 118 membres du Congrès des Etats-Unis et une résolution adoptée par le Parlement européen.

is/22.08.1989

His Excellency SR. DR. JAVIER PEREZ DE CUELLAR,
Secretary General of the United Nations,
New York, USA.

YOUR EXCELLENCY: First allow me to give you my sincere and respectful greetings.

I am taking the liberty of writing to your Excellency to draw to your attention the fact that the process of decolonisation of Portuguese Timor has still not been resolved by the United Nations, and it is important that this should not be forgotten. For our part, we, the people of Timor, think that we must be consulted on the future of our land. That is why I am writing, as a leader of the Catholic Church, and as a citizen of Timor, to ask you, as Secretary General, to start in Timor the most normal and democratic process of decolonisation, i.e. the holding of a referendum. The people of Timor must be allowed to express their views on their future through a plebiscite. Hitherto the people have not been consulted. Others speak in the name of the people. Indonesia says that the people of Timor Timur (East Timor: trans.) have already chosen integration, but the people of Timor themselves have never said this. Portugal wants to let time solve the problem. And we continue to die as a people and a nation.

You are a democrat and a friend of human rights. Therefore let your excellency demonstrate with facts your respect for the spirit and letter of the United Nations charter, which grants to all the peoples of this planet the right to choose their own destiny freely, consciously and responsibly. Your excellency, there is no more democratic means of ascertaining the supreme desire of the Timorese people than the holding of a referendum promoted by the United Nations for the people of Timor.

Sr. Pérez de Cuellar, I thank you for all your sympathy with the people of Timor and conclude by expressing once again my best wishes.

With admiration and respect, I remain

DOM CARLOS FILIPE XIMENES BELO SDB,

Titular Bishop of Lorium,
Apostolic Administrator of Dili.

ADOPTED MAY 1989

(h) Doc. B2-170/89

Resolution

The European Parliament, on the situation in East Timor

- having regard to the resolutions of 10 July 1986(1) and 15 September 1988(2) on the situation in East Timor (1),

A. aware of the dramatic appeal from Bishop Dom Carlos Filipe Kimenes Belo, Apostolic Administrator of East Timor, to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Perez de Cuellar, where he states: "we are dying as people as well as a nation",

B. whereas the Indonesian Government has stated that it is not prepared to consult the people of East Timor about their own future.

1. Repeats its point of view that it is a fundamental right of all peoples freely to choose their own future;

2. Calls again upon the Foreign Ministers meeting in European Political Cooperation to take diplomatic steps in order to achieve the right of self-determination for the people of East Timor;

3. Urges the Commission to provide all possible aid to the refugee camps, in East Timor as well as in Portugal, and to inform Parliament about their actions;

4. Requests its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Foreign Ministers meeting in European Political Cooperation, the Secretary General of the UN, the Government of Indonesia and to the Assembly of the Non-aligned Countries.

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1. OJ No. C 227, 8.9.1986, p. 124
2. OJ No. C 262, 10.10.1988, p. 142

CONGRESSMAN
TONY HALL NEWS
Third District, Ohio 2448 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515 202 225-6465

R 05 JUL. 1989

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE:
FRIDAY, JUNE 9, 1989 AMs

#89-10
CONTACT: MICHAEL GESSEL

118 HOUSE MEMBERS RAISE CONCERN OVER EAST TIMOR

WASHINGTON—A bipartisan group of 118 House members, led by Rep. Tony P. Hall (D-Ohio), asked President George Bush to raise human rights concerns in East Timor when he meets Indonesian President Suharto in Washington on June 9.

"Our concern is that failure to mention the situation in East Timor during your meeting with President Suharto would signal a lack of United States attention to the serious human rights and humanitarian issues in that troubled territory," the lawmakers told Bush in a letter.

East Timor, a predominantly Roman Catholic territory and former Portuguese colony, was invaded by Indonesia in 1975 and forcibly annexed the following year. More than 100,000 out of a pre-occupation population of 700,000 perished in East Timor stemming from the Indonesian invasion and subsequent military operations. The invasion was carried out largely with equipment supplied by the United States.

Citing Catholic Church sources, the letter says, "Severe violations of human rights, including executions, rape and beatings, are a recurring problem. Armed conflict persists in the territory, as does tight Indonesian military control over East Timor's population."

"The United States should firmly support the continued presence in East Timor of international humanitarian organizations, as well as the efforts of human rights groups to obtain unrestricted access to the territory," the lawmakers wrote.

The House members also drew attention to a recent request by East Timor's Catholic Bishop, who called for a referendum on the future of the territory that might end the bloody 14-year old conflict. Hall noted that Indonesia's minister of security had recently characterized the Bishop's request, communicated to UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar, as "unpatriotic."

President Suharto visited the United States to receive a 1989 United Nations Population Award on June 8. In their letter to Bush, the lawmakers say that "concern has been raised about Indonesia's birth control activities in East Timor in view of the large-scale loss of population there."

Hall said, "The fact that Suharto is receiving this award is somewhat strange, even Orwellian, considering East Timor's huge loss of population through violent means. I question the nature of any population control program carried out by the invaders themselves."

The text of the letter follows:

Dear Mr. President:

For many years, United States Representatives and Senators have been concerned about conditions in the former Portuguese colony of East Timor, a predominantly Roman Catholic territory which was invaded by Indonesia in 1975 and forcibly annexed. At this time, we write specifically to request that you discuss the issue of East Timor when you meet with Indonesian President Suharto in June.

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ADD ONE
EAST TIMOR

We appreciate that the Reagan Administration raised human rights and humanitarian issues regarding East Timor on an ongoing basis with top Indonesian officials. We urge your Administration to continue to address these concerns with the Government of Indonesia.

We are aware that some improvements have occurred in East Timor in recent years. We also note that on January 1, 1989, the Indonesians declared the island officially "opened," which suggested that travel restrictions regarding East Timor would be lifted after 14 years of tightly controlled access. Nevertheless, several journalists and Western parliamentarians who have visited East Timor since this "opening" have reported that they were inhibited in their contact with the Timorese. Further, reports from authoritative Catholic Church sources, as cited, for example, in *The New York* Times of January 22, 1989, make it clear that severe violations of human rights, including executions, rape, and beatings, are a recurring problem. Armed conflict persists in the territory, as does tight Indonesian military control over East Timor's population.

Given the dramatic loss of life in East Timor as a result of the fighting and 14-year occupation--acknowledged to total at least 100,000 persons out of an original population of less than 700,000—we wish to reiterate our support for measures to prevent further suffering for the people of East Timor. In particular, we believe that the United States should firmly support the continued presence in East Timor of international humanitarian organizations, as well as the efforts of human rights groups to obtain unrestricted access to the territory. International humanitarian organizations with existing programs in East Timor, and others that wish to initiate programs, should be allowed to provide expanded assistance and protection for the East Timorese, including political detainees and their relatives.

Other humanitarian matters warrant attention. A specific case is the orphanage in the town of Venilale, near an area of reported conflict, where sickness and malnutrition afflict the children. Nurses reportedly have refrained from visiting them because of Indonesian army interrogations over the whereabouts of the children's parents.

There appears to be a need for additional medical care and supplies in certain rural areas of the territory. Further, concern has been raised about Indonesia's birth control activities in East Timor in view of the large-scale loss of population there.

Finally, we call to your attention that the leader of East Timor's Catholic Church, Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, has sought the support of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for a referendum through which the people of East Timor could participate in the determination of their own future. The bishop's initiative is based on the view that a peaceful resolution of the conflict in East Timor, which is the source of much of the humanitarian need in the territory, should address the concerns and interests of the Timorese people themselves.

We would encourage you to support discussions with the United Nations, Indonesia, Portugal, and all interested parties, that seek to secure a just and lasting peace for the people of East Timor. At the same time, we acknowledge the constructive role Indonesia is playing in seeking an end to the occupation of Cambodia, and the many other political and strategic ties between our two countries. Our concern is that failure to mention the situation in East Timor during your meeting with President Suharto would signal a lack of United States attention to the serious human rights and humanitarian issues in that troubled territory.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

Anthony C. Beilenson (D-Calif.)
Howard L. Berman (D-Calif.)
Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.)
George E. Brown Jr. (D-Calif.)
Ronald V. Dellums (D-Calif.)
Julian C. Dixon (D-Calif.)
Mervyn M. Dymally (D-Calif.)
Don Edwards (D-Calif.)
Vic Fazio (D-Calif.)
Augustus F. Hawkins (D-Calif.)
Tom Lantos (D-Calif.)
Mel Levine (D-Calif.)
Robert T. Matsui (D-Calif.)
Matthew G. Martinez (D-Calif.)
Leon E. Panetta (D-Calif.)
Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.)
Fortney H. Stark (D-Calif.)
Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.)
Ben Nighthorse Campbell (D-Colo.)
Patricia Schroeder (D-Colo.)
Sam Gejdenson (D-Conn.)
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Thomas R. Carper (D-Del.)
Walter E. Fauntroy (D-D.C.)
Dante B. Fascell (D-Fla.)
William Lehman (D-Fla.)

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ADD TWO
EAST TIMOR

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Lane Evans (D-Ill.)
Charles A. Hayes (D-Ill.)
William O. Lipinski (D-Ill.)
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